



Severe Weather Bulletin

Iowa Department of Administrative Services

April 2008

April 7-11 is Severe Weather Awareness Week

Iowa and wacky weather are pretty much the same. Winter? Too cold. Summer? Too muggy. Spring and fall? A lot of times, simply too short. Nevertheless, even though Iowans are accustomed to unusual weather, too few of us have a plan to follow when severe weather strikes. And, with the incidence of tornados and severe thunder storms soon to rise, putting together a plan is a great idea. Here are some tips from the National Weather Service.

Meet with your family to develop a plan

- Pick two rendezvous places - one in the neighborhood in case of a fire and one out of the neighborhood in case it's not possible to return home.
- Choose an out-of-state friend for everyone in your family to contact to report they're okay in case your family gets separated.
- Figure out what the family will do in case of a widespread evacuation.



Implement your plan

- Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones
- Install and upkeep smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
 - Inspect for hazards (things that might fall or cause injury) and repair
 - Learn basic safety measures such as CPR and first aid
 - Teach children how and when to call 911
 - Keep supplies stocked, including blankets, water - anything you might need if evacuation is required.

Practice and maintain your plan

It's all about communications and thinking ahead. Whether you choose to conduct drills or simply talk about the plan, make sure you don't run the risk of confusion or panic.

For more information on putting together a plan for your family, go to www.redcross.org.

Rainy Day Facts

1,800 thunderstorms occur at any moment around the world. That's 16 million thunderstorms a year. Here are a few more thunderstorm tidbits:

- A typical thunderstorm is 15 miles in diameter and lasts an average of 30 minutes
- About 10% of the thunderstorms occurring in the U.S. every year are rated severe
- To qualify as severe, a thunderstorm needs to produce hail of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter, winds of at least 58 mph or a tornado
- Every thunderstorm needs moisture, unstable air and lift
- Hail causes more than \$1 billion in crop and property damage every year
- More victims of severe weather die from flash flooding than any other form of severe weather — 140 fatalities each year



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*Get the facts and
learn more!*

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What To Listen For:

TORNADO WATCH:

Tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

TORNADO WARNING:

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If a tornado warning is issued for your area and the sky becomes threatening, move to your pre-designated place of safety.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM

WATCH: Severe thunderstorms are possible in your area.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM

WARNING: Severe thunderstorms are occurring.

Severe Weather with a Twist

It's beginning to look a lot like tornado season. Although technically, tornadoes can occur any time of the year at about any location, spring and summer are the most common seasons for tornado activity in the Midwest.

Tornadoes are most often associated with thunderstorms - often at the leading edge of the storm - and form with a combination of shifting winds and rising air. As the tornado begins to form, it can appear to be

transparent - until it picks up enough dust to darken the funnel or a cloud develops within the funnel.

Typically, tornadoes travel from the southwest to northeast but, then again, anyone with experience watching tornadoes knows that they aren't that predictable.

Wind speeds caused by tornadoes also vary but have been known to reach velocities of greater than 200 miles per hour.

Of course, the most important thing to remember about a tornado is to not take chances. Be alert when a tornado watch is issued and be prepared to take cover if the watch changes to a warning. Take shelter in a strong building, away from windows and, preferably, in the most interior portion of the space, such as a bathroom.

Twister Tales

Tornadoes have been the scourge of the North American plains for countless generations. Long enough for plenty of people to get the wrong ideas about the behavior of these devastating storms and what to do should you ever confront one.

Here is a balance of myth and fact provided by the National Weather Service.

Myth: Areas near lakes, rivers and mountains are safe from tornadoes.

Fact: *No area is geographically immune. A tornado near Yellowstone National Park left a path of destruction up and down a 10,000 foot mountain.*

Myth: The low pressure from a tornado causes buildings to 'explode' as the tornado passes overhead.

Fact: Most structural damage is caused by violent winds and flying debris.

Myth: Windows should be opened as a tornado ap-

proaches to equalize pressure and minimize damage.

Fact: Leave the windows alone and simply seek shelter.

Myth: People caught in the open should seek shelter under highway overpasses.

Fact: Overpasses, ditches and culverts provide extremely limited protection. Always seek a sturdy, reinforced building whenever possible.

Statewide Tornado Drill April 9

Of course, real tornadoes don't give you much of a timetable with which to prepare, but the drill scheduled for Wednesday, April 9 will at least give you the opportunity to know where to go if a tornado is truly heading towards your workplace.

Designated shelter areas are typically in the basement or below-grade floors.

Stay away from windows. If you aren't sure where to go for a tornado drill, ask your supervisor.

⇒ At 10 a.m., a **Tornado Watch** (drill) will be issued throughout the Capitol Complex. No sheltering is required with a Watch.

⇒ Then, at 10:15 a.m., a **Tornado Warning**

(drill) will be issued. Everyone should proceed to designated shelters immediately.

⇒ At 10:30 a.m., the all **Clear** (drill) will be issued, allowing everyone to return to their work stations.

If there is actual severe weather April 9, the drills will be postponed to April 10.